

Translation Problems of Similes and Metaphors

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Abstract: In this article are discussed translation problems, semantics and other features of simile and metaphors.

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Introduction. Since Aristotle's period, scholars have regarded similes and metaphors as equivalent figures of speech sharing very similar comprehension, interpretation and usage pattern. Similes are rhetorical device that makes the text more impressive and bright. It is a comparison between completely two different objects. The compared is called the tenor while the compared to is called the vehicle. The tenor and the vehicle are connected by the following links: like, as...as, as though, as if, as like, such as, as...as, etc. Most common among them are the link words "like and as". Some similes have their equivalents in Uzbek and Russian. The translation of similes sometimes becomes difficult and very tricky, posing many different troubles if the translator is not aware of the cultural differences. In order to get rid of such problems, the translator has to avoid the literal translation that imposes the meaning.

Literature review. In a way Lakoff and Johnson's work is a Copernican turn in the theory of metaphor as it has changed the focus from metaphor as a property of words to metaphor as the property of concepts. It means that metaphors are not only literary patterns but ways in which we perceive the world around us. Lakoff and Johnson were brought together by the common interest in metaphor and quickly discovered that they both found the traditional views of metaphor unsatisfactory. Johnson for one had obtained evidence that metaphor is widely used in everyday life and thought of ordinary people, not just of those for whom the art of writing or giving public speeches is a profession. Thus, their major argument is that the process of human thinking is largely metaphorical in itself.

Simile is a trope that describes one thing by comparing it with another, suggesting similarities between them, although they are clearly different. Simile is composed of two propositions and it has four parts which are:

Topic-the topic of the first proposition(nonfigurative),i.e. the thing really being talked about.

Image-The topic of the first proposition(figurative),i.e. the thing really being compared with
Point of similarity-found in the comments of both the propositioned involved or the comment of the Event proposition which has the image as a topic.

A metaphor itself is a word or phrase that is used to make a comparison between two people, things, animals, or places. Other than adding vividness and beauty, a metaphor is also used to make an even stronger image in the reader's head by describing the place, subject or object as something unlikely.

Discussion. A metaphor can be very helpful for people, especially for kids who are learning the meaning of specific words, because they provide a more visual description of the word. For example, there is a metaphor "The snow is a white blanket" being taught in the kindergarten. Through this metaphor, the kids can learn that the snow falls all over the place during the winter and it looks like a white blanket covering the earth.

On the other hand, a simile is a figure of speech that compares two things or people which are not similar. Metaphor and simile perform the same function, but in a more visible and literal manner by using the linking words “like” or “as”. So, the comparison used in a simile is more of an indirect one rather than the direct comparison used in a metaphor. For example, we can say “My life is a bar of dark chocolate” as a metaphor, but if we want to rephrase it into a simile, we should say “My life is as bitter as a bar of dark chocolate. Similes are forms of metaphors.

By the definition, metaphor and simile transfer the sense or aspects of one word to another. An example of a metaphor can be “Success has many parents, but failure is an orphan”. The meaning, to a native English speaker, is plainly: Everyone wants credit for success, but no one wants the blame for a failure. The metaphoric aspect is in aligning the lives of happy children in stable families and miserable orphans with no parents with the concepts of success and failure. To recast the above example as a simile, you can say “Success is like a happy child with many parents, but failure is like an orphan alone in the world”. Similes make the connection much more obvious.

Compared to simile, metaphors are not always obvious, and if you’re not totally familiar with the source language they can sometimes be unexpected. In fact, some sentences might be difficult to translate for some people who might not catch the comparison and they end up translating literally. In fact, literal translation is often a terrible idea for metaphors and similes, because they are often so directly tied to the source culture. As a result, it is usually necessary to tie the translation to the target culture. If the target culture doesn’t have the concept of a certain thing to work with, a translator can use a whole different situation.

The important part is the meaning, not the literal translation. Of course, there are possibilities of getting into trouble by being creative instead of accurate, but a good translator has to be able to bring the original metaphor and simile over to the target language as an art, not a science.

Examples:

Metaphors Similes

Tom’s eyes were ice. As cute as a bug’s ear

My teacher is a dragon As cunning as a fox

Time is money As cool as a cucumber

He is a shining star. As cold as ice

His heart is a cold iron. As clear as crystal

Their home was a prison. As busy as a bee

Life is a roller coaster. As brave as a lion

Her lovely voice was music to his ears As blind as a bat

The classroom was a zoo. As black as coal

The snow is a white blanket. As black as coal

According to Larsen there are five ways of translating metaphor (a simile would follow steps 3, 4 and 5):

1. The metaphor may be kept if the receptor language permits.
2. A metaphor may be translated as a simile (adding like or as)
3. A metaphor of the receptor language which has the same meaning may be substituted
4. A metaphor may be kept and the meaning explained.
5. The meaning of the metaphor may be translated without keeping the metaphorical imagery.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the only difference between a simile and a metaphor is that in a

simile the comparison is explicitly stated, usually by a word such as “like” or “as”, while in a metaphor the comparison is just implied.

Now consider the following examples of metaphor and simile:

Metaphor: You are my sunshine

Simile: Your eyes are like sunshine

Metaphor: You are a rock.

Simile: You are like a rock.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that a figure of speech is a way of saying a message which are not meant to be understood exactly as they are said as they are not literal statements.

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